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ABSTRACT

This guide to community education offers strategies and suggestions for responding to the call for more community involvement in partnership efforts that will benefit education and society. First, a brief introduction summarizes the philosophy of community education, defining it as a belief that learning is lifelong and that self-help efforts foster human dignity, compassion, and individual pride. Following this, a justification for developing community education programs is presented, and some of the forms the programs might take are suggested. Next, the history of community education is described, and fundamental requirements for changing a traditional school system into a community education system are listed. Succeeding sections focus respectively on citizen involvement; leadership and staffing; community partnerships; community education and the K-12 program; identifying needs; community education activities; and paying for community education. The guide concludes with brief descriptions of five existing programs, a list of references, and sources of further information. (KH)

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The Learning Community

Mary Richardson Lee
and
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With a Foreword by
William F. Pierce
Executive Director
of the
Council of Chief State
School Officers

The Learning Community

By Mary Richardson Boo and Larry E. Decker

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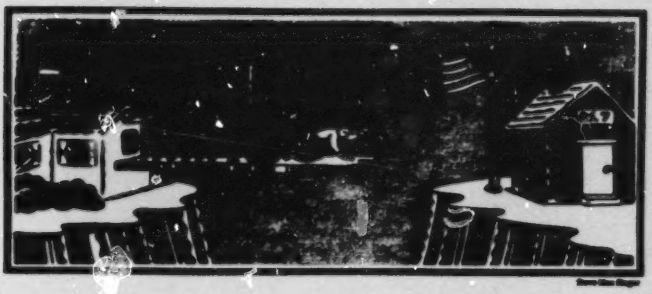

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FOREWORD

The basic concepts in *The Learning Community* are not new, because community education is not new. And yet this is in many ways a very timely little book.

In my judgment, community education is one of the most practical approaches that can be taken to meet the changing needs of education for the twenty-first century. Beyond that, it is a practical way for a community to respond to its own changing needs.

Communities are fluid and changing. Unfortunately, educators have often appeared to be unaware of or unconcerned about community change. Many educators did not adequately consider or plan for the need for a technologically literate work force, for example, and far too many recent graduates arrived at the work place improperly prepared. Too often, we have had to play catch up because we have not tracked the pulse of the community. And there is absolutely no excuse for being out of touch with community change if we understand the concept of a learning community.

There are two major elements of the learning community concept that I think are critical: (1) the value of involving the community, including business and industry, in partnership efforts that will benefit education and society; and (2) the value of parent and community involvement as it affects the K-12 program and student achievement. The education of elementary and secondary students continues to be a primary concern in most communities, and community education is not always

viewed as helping to provide solutions to K-12 problems. The challenge to community educators is to assert leadership and convince mainstream educators and the community at large that the processes of community education are effective strategies for K-12 educational improvement.

This publication is a very practical guide to community education. It should be of equal value to the student who wants an introduction to community education and the administrator who already knows what community education is and is considering implementing a program at the state or local level.

But *The Learning Community* is more than that. It offers strategies and suggestions that respond directly to what is perhaps the most ill-defined recommendation found in most of the education reports of the last two years. That recommendation is, of course, the one that calls for more community involvement — on its face, a fine-sounding idea, but in practice a concept not easily defined. After all, the "community" is complex and multifaceted, and there are innumerable ways to ensure involvement — of someone, somewhere. Community involvement is difficult to define because genuine involvement must reflect local mores and needs. It is one of community education's strengths that, irrespective of local differences, the processes of community education are widely applicable.

The inherent simplicity of the community education concept has caused many to try to define it in philosophical terms and therefore complicate it unduly. Others tend to dismiss community education as having no clear definition. Simple or complex, the fact remains

that, properly applied, the processes of community education work.

I urge you to read the following pages. They offer food for thought, strategies for reform, and ideas that will work and generate energy for the tasks that lie ahead.

William F. Pierce, Executive Director
Council of Chief State School Officers
Washington, D.C.

Many schools are like islands set apart from the mainland of life by a deep moat of convention and tradition. A drawbridge is lowered at certain periods during the day in order that the part-time inhabitants may cross over to the island in the morning and back to the mainland at night.

Why do these young people go out to the island? To learn how to live on the mainland. When they reach the island, they are provided with excellent books that tell about life on the mainland.

Once in a while, as a special treat, the bus takes a few of the more favored islanders on a tour of the mainland. But this is allowed only when reading books about the mainland has been completed.

After the last inhabitant of the island has left in the afternoon, the drawbridge is raised. Janitors clean up the island, and the lights go out. No one is left except perhaps a lonely watchman keeping a vigil along the shoreline. The island is lifeless most of Saturday and Sunday. The drawbridge collects cobwebs all summer and during other long holidays.

One evening a year the island's lights burn late for an event called graduation. Then the islanders depart, never to set foot on the island again.

After the graduates leave the island for the last time, they are bombarded by problems of life on the mainland. Sometimes one of the graduates may mutter, "On the island I read something about that in a book."

William G. Carr to the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, 1942

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INTRODUCTION

The National Commission on Excellence in Education asserted in *A Nation at Risk* that "educational reform should focus on the goal of creating a Learning Society" – a society "that affords all members the opportunity to stretch their minds to full capacity, from early childhood through adulthood, learning more as the world itself changes." The Commission members didn't call it "community education," but the Learning Society they described has been the goal of community educators for almost 50 years.

Community education reflects the belief that learning is lifelong, and that self-help efforts foster human dignity, compassion, and individual pride. Community education is a philosophy, a way of looking at public education. It advocates a community process through which citizens, schools, government agencies, and community organizations can work together to offer education, recreation, and human services to everyone in the community.

Community education promotes:

- Education programs for learners of all ages, backgrounds, and needs.
- Full use of school facilities.
- Citizen involvement in community problem solving and decision making.
- Use of community resources in the kindergarten-through-12th-grade curriculum.
- Partnerships between community agencies to address together the needs of the community.

Because each community is different from all of the others, there is no standardized "community education

programs." Community education programs work precisely because they are designed by local residents to meet local needs. What they have in common is the goal of a sharing, *learning* community.

This introduction to community education offers a framework and a direction to those who would start close to home — in their neighborhoods, towns, and cities — to build what educator John Goodlad has described as "an ecosystem of institutions and agencies conscious of their responsibility for developing the knowledge, values, skills, and habits of a free people."

Only one-fourth of American adults now have children in public schools, so it is little wonder that schools in many communities have become isolated, with few ties to the majority of residents. Community education offers schools a way to reach out to the larger community — to discover common bonds, form enduring partnerships, and reawaken a lost sense of community.

NO SCHOOL IS AN ISLAND

FORTY years ago, William G. Carr of the National Education Association described the typical public school as an island connected to the mainland by a drawbridge that could be let down every morning and afternoon, Monday through Friday, for the children to come and go, and once or twice a year in the evening for adults from the mainland to visit on brief, ceremonial occasions. The final irony, Carr pointed out, was that the main purpose of the island stronghold was to teach the children how to live on the mainland.

Carr's island image persists, with some validity. As the percentage of the adult population with direct ties to the schools declines, more and more schools are in fact isolated within their communities. Public schools are faced with taxpayers' revolts, declining public confidence, and rising public expectation — constantly being asked to do more with fewer resources. Significantly, those members of the general public who consistently express the least confidence in the schools are nonparents — those adults with no current ties to the schools' clients, staffs, or buildings.

Educators have long recognized the need for an educating community, a community in which the school is recognized, valued, and supported by everyone. The success of the old one-room schoolhouse is now clearly understood as the product of a totally supportive community that was willing to pay in cash, goods, and services for the education of the next generation.

Critics of today's public schools abound. Schools are expected to develop children's academic and intellectual competencies, instill social and ethical values, train students for the work force (adapting quickly to changing market conditions), develop sound physical and mental health, and prepare children for intelligent, responsible, productive adulthood. Given such an unrealistic set of expectations, the schools are doomed to failure. The simple fact is that the schools alone cannot accomplish all of the tasks assigned to them. For good or ill, many other elements of the community play a part in educat-

ing children. From street gangs to the family, from churches to television, youth agencies, and the business community — educational influences are everywhere, in some cases making the school's job easier, and, in others, making it almost impossible.

How can public schools tap into the constructive influences in the community, team up with all of the good and supportive things out there, so that the total "learning community" becomes a reality?

This brief book describes ways in which a traditional school can be transformed into a "community school" and become the focal point for building a learning community. The key ingredient is *attitude*.

Community education is a way of looking at public education as a total community enterprise. It is not a program to be added on, a frill to win public support, or a fad to be discarded when the next fad comes along. Community education preaches and practices three essential things:

- Education is a lifelong process.
- Everyone in the community — individuals, businesses, public and private agencies — has a stake in the mission of educating the children of the community.
- Citizens have a right and a responsibility to be involved in deciding how the community's educational resources should be used.

WHEN community education is explained, in broad terms, to those who ask what it is, the reaction is almost always positive: "That's a great idea — why isn't everybody doing it?" But a common complaint from those who have observed local community education programs in a superficial way is: "Community education seems awfully complicated."

Why does the notion of community involvement in lifelong education sometimes seem to be complex? Part of the explanation lies in the fact that no two communities are identical, so no two community education pro-

grams are alike. No true community educator would claim to be able to go into a community and establish a "community education program." What trained community educators offer is a *process* by which each community can look at its own needs and resources and devise ways to put the two together to improve both the lives of individual community members and the quality of life of the community itself.

The process of community education leads to programs. The community education program in rural Baldwin County, Michigan, bears little resemblance to the program in urban St. Louis, Missouri, but the process by which they were developed is the same.

Community education programs take many forms: adult classes, recreation activities, youth clubs, tutoring programs, senior citizens' services, after-school child care programs, school-business partnerships, job preparation, parent-child hobby clubs, school-readiness programs carried out at home, etc. If representatives of broad segments of the community are involved in identifying specific local needs and devising appropriate, affordable responses, the entire community "buys into" the local program because the community itself has been part of the decision-making process. The goals, methods, resources, and desired outcomes are widely understood and accepted.

Political and business organizations are very experienced and sophisticated in building partnerships to achieve commonly agreed-upon goals. Their agendas — getting elected or making a profit — are much simpler than those of a community striving for less tangible goals such as "a better community" or "better schools." The community education process offers citizens from all walks of life an opportunity to develop their own agendas and devise their own methods for reaching their goals. And, in the process, common bonds are discovered, working partnerships formed, and the sense of community enriched and strengthened.

In the final analysis, the goal of community education *is* simple: a better life for everyone in the community.

HISTORY

SOME historians of community education point to the settlement houses of the late 19th and early 20th centuries as models of community partnerships developed to meet the social, education, and economic needs of newly arrived immigrants. Others cite New Deal programs developed in response to the Great Depression: the Civilian Conservation Corps, the National Youth Administration, and the Works Progress Administration. All were aimed at getting maximum good from available resources and encouraging people to work together to achieve common goals.

In the depths of the Depression, the best known of all community education programs was started in Flint, Michigan, the result of a partnership between Frank J. Manley, a Flint educator, and Charles Stewart Mott, a wealthy local industrialist. Manley and Mott started with the idea of using public schools during non-traditional times — after school, in the evening, during the summer. Their premise was a simple, familiar one: give kids something to do and they will stay out of trouble. The idea grew to encompass the notion that schools could provide recreation and enrichment for adults, too — and the lighted schoolhouse became the symbol of the community school.

The community school idea spread to other Michigan cities and towns in the 1940s and 1950s. The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation provided funds for bringing visitors to Flint to observe community school administrators and programming in action.

In the 1960s, the Foundation began an outreach effort to advance community education awareness and development in all 50 states by establishing community education centers in universities and state departments of education.

Federal legislation in 1974 and 1978 broadened the concept of community education by identifying community colleges, recreation departments, and nonprofit associations as well as public school districts as appro-

priate agencies to develop model community education programs.

As the community school idea developed and changed, community education philosophers grappled with definitions that would describe but not limit an emerging, dynamic concept. One thing was clear: as the community education idea spread from one community to another, it took on some of the special characteristics of each community. Diversity has characterized community education from its first movement beyond Flint.

Fads spread quickly and tend to have short lives. Community education claims, with good reason, to be an educational trend, and there is solid evidence of its slow but steady acceptance as a way of looking at public education:

- Twenty-six states have state plans for community education.
- Twenty-nine states have state school board resolutions supporting community education.
- Twenty-three states have legislation supporting community education.
- Forty-nine states have at least one designated community education person in the state department of education.
- Twenty states provide some type of state funding for community education.
- Twenty-three states have state community education advisory councils.
- There is a 50-state network of community education development centers.
- State community education associations with a total membership of more than 8,000 individuals have been organized in 40 states.
- The National Community Education Association in Alexandria, Virginia, has a membership of 1,500, including 150 institutions.

- More than 100,000 persons have received training in community education workshops throughout the United States.

- Community education was formally recognized and supported by the U.S. Congress and the President in legislation adopted in 1974 and 1978, and is now an approved federal educational purpose eligible for funding under terms of federal block grants to the states.

WHAT IS NEEDED

THESE things must happen before a community can begin to change a traditional school system into a community education system:

- Community policy makers (school and non-school, elected and non-elected) must endorse the basic concept of community education.

- Community leaders and citizens must be supportive of the community education idea.

- Professional educators must support the idea that schools should serve the total community and must be willing to have citizens involved in the schools in a variety of ways.

- A process must be established for involving community representatives in the identification of community needs and the mobilizing of community resources to meet those needs.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

WHEN a community education plan is developed by a group of citizens, interest is usually high from the beginning. Channeling that interest into continuing citizen involvement in the schools is almost always at the top of the list of hopes the professional educator brings to the development of a community education program.

To assure that the hope becomes a reality, the local community education plan should define, in very specific terms, the purposes of citizen involvement, and should develop structures and procedures consistent with those purposes. Two basic questions must be answered: who will be involved, and how will the involvement be organized.

Achieving the enrichment and support that an enthusiastic corps of citizen volunteers can bring to public schools takes work. Both professional educators and citizens must learn to respect and trust each other — a process that takes time as well as good intentions.

If local advisory councils are developed, decisions must be made about the best methods for collecting citizen input, and an understanding must be reached on the limits of citizen responsibility. The specific role of the advisory council must be defined in the community education plan. Councils may have policy-making authority in specific areas, or be strictly advisory. Some councils carry out their own projects from start to finish. Some are appointed, others are elected, some are self-appointed. Some communities have special task forces for specific purposes instead of one council. Many community education programs sponsor public forums, conduct polls and surveys, and hold open meetings to keep in touch with community opinions and needs.

The diversity of citizen involvement in community education is another manifestation of the uniqueness of each local program. Citizens *must* be involved, or the program — whatever it is — is not community education. The form of that involvement depends on the wishes and resources of each individual community.

A major challenge of community education is how to manage growing citizen involvement, constantly providing new leadership opportunities so that citizen participation is continuously renewed.

LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING

COMMUNITY education can be — and has been — organized and administered in a variety of ways. A community education service area may be the school district, or it may be a sub-community within the school district. In some communities, the city government, the recreation department, or a community college is the administrative agency for community education.

Organizing for community education almost always requires changes in the staffing pattern of the administrative agency. An important first step is to identify those individuals who have the attitudes and skills necessary to work successfully with the community. Usually, a system-wide leadership position is established, with additional full-time or part-time positions at each designated community school or other community site. The role and duties of the community education staff should be clearly defined and accepted by the community and its policy makers, and everyone involved should be in agreement about how the community education effort "fits" in the overall organizational structure.

The community educator may report directly to the superintendent of schools, an assistant to the superintendent, a community advisory council, a consortium of community leaders, or to some combination of any of these.

There are advantages and disadvantages in any administrative structure. If the community educator is an

assistant principal at a local school site, he or she is in an excellent position to know neighborhood needs and resources. On the other hand, a community educator in the school system's central office has the advantage of a community-wide perspective and is likely to have greater community-wide influence.

Wherever the community educator is placed in the administrative structure, he or she needs the support of community leaders: the school board, the superintendent, and the building principals; the mayor and elected council members; the city manager and directors of city agencies; county commissioners and boards; and the leaders of community service and business groups.

The community educator's training and the wishes of the community are likely to determine whether his or her chief role is to provide services or to assist others in providing them. The crucial thing is that the role be clearly defined and accepted by the community and its policy makers.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

WHEN interested citizens get together and mutually agree on the community needs they wish to address, the sharing of resources becomes not just a common goal but an almost automatic outcome of the process.

Interagency agreements to share resources and work cooperatively take many forms. Formal agreements are preferred in some communities, while informal agreements and joint planning work well in other communities and in some situations. Improved communication, more consultation, and increased client referral among agencies almost always result from cooperative agreements, whether formal or informal. And joint planning

almost always leads to more efficient and economical uses of facilities, money, and human resources.

Formal agreements have some advantages:

- When operating costs are shared, the money goes farther.
- The staffs of the cooperating agencies increase their professional credibility by searching for the best ways to serve their clients, rather than competing for clients (and perhaps funding).
- A single agency doesn't have to "go it alone" in the face of difficult, hard-to-solve problems; responsibility is shared with others, who develop a stake in a successful outcome.
- A program becomes community-based, rather than school-based or agency-based. Everyone and everything in the community becomes a potential resource.
- In a time of diminishing resources, a shared mission will quickly make duplication obvious, and cost savings are likely to result when resources are shared.
- The program activity is taken into the community, and the problem — whether child abuse or vandalism or the isolation of senior citizens — looks less like a school or agency problem and more like the community problem it actually is.
- Other resources are more readily identified, collaboration with additional agencies is more likely, and the options for addressing problems are increased.

Partnerships between schools and community agencies, whether public or private, can enrich the regular school curriculum. Community partnerships open up new worlds and new possibilities for youngsters, helping them see the connection between learning and living. Partnerships also develop community appreciation and support for the work of public educators.

Community education's experience with interagency collaboration confirms that together *is* better.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND THE K-12 PROGRAM

COMMUNITY education may have little impact on a school's kindergarten-through-12th-grade program, or it may affect it profoundly. The difference in impact is usually attributable to the *intent* of the community education program and the attitude of the K-12 personnel toward community education.

In Tucson, Arizona, the school building principals *are* the community education leaders, and community education in Tucson is characterized by the continuous involvement of all levels of K-12 personnel in planning, implementation, and communication.

Typically, if a school district's board and central office have a strong commitment to community education, the K-12 curriculum is constantly enriched by the use of community resources in and out of the classroom. Supervised enrichment and recreation opportunities are available to school-age youngsters before and after school. Volunteers are involved in a variety of activities to supplement and support the K-12 program, and children are presented with numerous role models, including their parents, who are involved in education-related activities aimed at personal and community betterment.

Through interagency cooperation and private-public partnerships encouraged and organized through community education, supplementary and remedial educational opportunities become available to all school-age youngsters.

"Education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living. The school must represent present life — life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or the playground."

John Dewey

IDENTIFYING NEEDS

COMMUNITY education often begins when a community group acknowledges a common problem and sets out, as a group, to identify the community agencies and individuals that could help solve it. If the initial effort is successful, there is a strong impetus to take on other challenges and address other needs.

The process of identifying community needs and community resources can in itself develop strong links between schools and members of the community and go a long way toward improving a school system's image in the community.

There are many ways to organize an assessment of community needs. The most important requirements are that the process be conducted by a group that is representative of the community, that it be open to everyone who is interested, and that timelines be established and followed.

The group responsible for conducting the needs assessment might be an appointive or elective body, an existing organization, a coalition of representatives of various organizations, or a group that simply includes everyone who wants to be included. The larger the group, the more likely the need for an executive committee to assume responsibility for developing a plan of action.

The goal of a needs-assessment process is a listing, by priority, of community needs, and a parallel listing of the community resources that might be used to address those needs. Information about community needs and resources may be gathered through written or telephone surveys or in open meetings or forums, or collected in any orderly way the group decides.

SOME COMMUNITY EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

IN some communities, the needs-assessment process has led to the adoption of academic and enrichment classes for residents of all ages. In other places, community improvement objectives have led to cooperative efforts to address specific community needs (crime prevention, day care for both the young and the elderly, job development, preventive health services, etc.). Some community education programs emphasize special activities and services to meet the needs of particular population groups (senior citizens, adolescents, the handicapped, the foreign-born, gifted children, etc.).

In some communities, the principal task of the community education staff is to coordinate the ongoing programs and services of many community agencies, eliminating duplication, and assuring that resources are used in the most cost-effective way.

In a year-long study funded by the Mott Foundation, Development Associates, Inc., an Arlington, Virginia, consulting firm, identified 18 major activities of community education programs across the country:

- Recreation or sports activities for adults (offered by 85 percent of the programs).
- Organized recreation and sports activities for school-age children apart from the regular school programs (83 percent).
- Noncredit general interest or enrichment classes for adults (81 percent).
- Cultural/crafts activities for adults (71 percent).
- Cultural/crafts activities for school-age children apart from the regular school program (69 percent).
- Newsletters or other forms of regular communication with the community (61 percent).
- Adult education classes for credit (54 percent).
- Vocational classes for credit (50 percent).

- Special programs on family relationships (43 percent).
- Health services (39 percent).
- Preschool or day care programs for children (37 percent).
- Special programs on crime, delinquency, violence, and vandalism (37 percent).
- Special programs for senior citizens (36 percent).
- Community social services (33 percent).
- College credit courses (28 percent).
- Special programs for minority populations (20 percent).
- Special programs for handicapped persons (18 percent).
- Special programs on neighborhood housing concerns (14 percent).

Local school buildings are often the site of community education activities. The reasons are simple: the buildings are usually in well-populated neighborhoods, easily accessible to community residents; they are generally well-maintained and serviced; and, in many communities, declining school populations have resulted in surplus school space.

Moreover, the traditional neighborhood school is typically used six or seven hours a day, five days a week, for nine months a year. In many communities, the local public school is the most obviously underused community resource, operating at about one-third of its potential.

But community education programs and activities can be carried on in a variety of settings, depending on a community's resources and needs. Successful programs have centered around schools, civic or private agency facilities, community centers, job-training centers, churches, businesses, and even homes. In Palm Beach, Florida, for example, community education locations

include school buildings, the Jewish Community Center, Lake Worth Shuffleboard Courts, West Palm Beach Library, five churches, the Community Action Council offices, the Palm Beach Gardens City Hall, 21 condominiums, three nursing homes, and several other locations.

PAYING FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION

THE cost of community education rarely exceeds one percent of the total school budget. In most cases, it is much less. The principal cost is usually the salary of the community education staff.

The sources and patterns of funding are varied. Some programs are paid for with mostly local funds, others with mostly outside funds. Some are financed out of general school funds, others directly from municipal funds. Fees sometimes cover all costs for adult and after-school classes and activities. In some cases, various community agencies contribute cash or other resources to community education programs. Private foundations and special fund-raising activities have provided funding in some communities. State and federal contributions have provided seed money to communities starting community education. Some single-purpose projects have been funded because they address a specific need; for example, drug abuse prevention programs have been funded with state and federal mental health funds, and senior citizen programs have received money from agencies on aging.

State aid is available in some states for such start-up costs as training personnel and providing direct professional assistance.

Community education may be funded in part through the federal block grant program because community ed-

ucation is one of the approved federal purposes for which block grant money may be spent.

The advantages of local funding are obvious: the programs are likely to be more stable; the local community has greater flexibility in deciding how to spend the money; and local commitment — and the likelihood of success — is greater.

The way in which a community finances community education depends ultimately on the value it places on the community education process and the programs that evolve from it. If a community's commitment is strong, the citizens are likely to look at the cost in relation to the benefits and will secure the resources necessary to continue or expand the program.

"By the year 2000 community education will be the basis for creating community coherence and common purposes. Community education will create what America needs most: a community of character, a coherence of values, a unity of purpose — if not perfect, at least in the making. . . . There is no social agency other than our public schools to do that."

M. Donald Thomas, South Carolina Deputy Superintendent of Schools for Public Accountability; former Superintendent of Salt Lake City Public Schools

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

BUILDING a learning community takes vision, commitment, and time. Programs may have to be modified from time to time and adapted to changing needs and fiscal realities. As Salem, Oregon, superintendent of schools Bill Kendrick said, "The models change, especially in hard times, but the goals and benefits are the same. What makes community education work is commitment to the idea that public schools belong to the community for lifelong learning. An immediate benefit is an increase in public interest and public support for the schools' major mission of educating the children."

The five community education programs described briefly below illustrate the diversity and adaptability of community education.

- Salem, Oregon, in spite of severe budget cuts, has expanded the number of community schools in the district from 12 to 28 in recent years. Public involvement in Salem schools continues to grow. In a recent school year, more than 7,200 volunteers contributed 98,000 hours to the K-12 program through community education.

- In Tucson, Arizona, the public schools were facing typical urban problems, from declining enrollment to vandalism. Looking for answers, local school officials realized that Tucson needed a way to build systematic, effective, and continuing connections between the K-12 system and the neighborhoods and communities served by the schools. As a result, community education in Tucson focuses on improving learning in the schools through the use of resources already available in the community.

- In rural Gloucester County, Virginia, a school system with only 3,000 students joined local human services organizations, county government agencies and departments, and voluntary civic groups to form the Gloucester Community Resource Council. What has emerged from exemplary interagency cooperation is a model for the

delivery of rural community education services. Through cooperation, Gloucester County residents received in one year more than $90,000 in new services without additional cost to the taxpayers. A cost-benefit study showed that $2.30 in services were provided for every $1.00 spent.

- The South Austin, Texas, Neighborhood Council identified many of the community's problems as education-related. The neighborhood, whose population is predominantly Mexican-American, with black and Anglo minorities, faced deteriorating housing, high truancy and delinquency rates, and the second highest crime rate in Austin. The neighborhood council believed there was little hope of breaking the poverty cycle and improving prospects for employment, health, and community betterment unless the attitudes of residents toward the local school could be changed. After only one year of operation of the model Becker Community School, the Austin School Board was sufficiently impressed to take the first steps toward city-wide implementation.

- Newton, Massachusetts, Community Schools receives half of its public funding from the school system and half from the city. This initial appropriation is used to pay for core staffing and to provide challenge grants to local community school committees. The local committees use the challenge grants as seed money to develop and implement local programming that generates revenues to meet direct program costs.

None of these community education programs was developed overnight. Leaders are quick to mention their early apprehensions and mistakes — and the hard work involved. All of them have been astonished at the degree of community enthusiasm and the quality of volunteer effort generated by community education.

Was the hard work worth it? The answer from these communities is a resounding yes. In spite of some unresolved old problems and emerging new ones, all of the communities described here, and thousands of others, have renewed their philosophical and financial commit-

ment to community education. Why? Because community education makes sense — educational, social, and economic sense.

Community education works.

THE LEARNING COMMUNITY — A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE

MORE than one cynic has noted that community education is like apple pie and motherhood — evoking images of home, warmth, and love, yet often less than perfect in execution. But community education *has* met the test of time and can legitimately claim to be improving both schools and their communities. The learning community is a reality as well as an ideal.

Charles Stewart Mott observed long ago that every person is, consciously or unconsciously, "in a kind of informal partnership with his community." When that partnership is directed toward individual growth and community improvement, the community will almost certainly be a better place to live.

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Salem, Oregon
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P.O. Box 12024
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Tucson, Arizona
Gene Weber
Director of School
Community Services
1010 E. 10th Street
Tucson, AZ 85719
(602) 791-6835

FOR MORE INFORMATION

There is a significant body of literature in the community education field. Training materials, including audio-visual presentations, are also available. Community Education Development Centers in all 50 states and most Canadian provinces can provide free information and assistance. For information or the address of a Community Education Center near you, write or call:

National Community Education Association
119 North Payne Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 683-6232

The National Center for Community Education in Flint, Michigan, offers many low-cost training opportunities that can be tailored to the particular needs and wishes of individual communities and groups. The address of the National Center for Community Education is:

National Center for Community Education
1017 Avon Street
Flint, Michigan 48503
(313) 238-0463

The community education movement is not limited to North America. For information about community education in other countries, write:

International Community Education Association
Education Department
County Hall, Glenfield
Leicestershire, LE 3 8RF
England

THE LEARNING SOCIETY

"In a world of ever-accelerating competition and change in the conditions of the workplace, of ever-greater danger, and of ever-larger opportunities for those prepared to meet them, educational reform should focus on the goal of creating a Learning Society. At the heart of such a society is the commitment to a set of values and to a system of education that affords all members the opportunity to stretch their minds to full capacity, from early childhood through adulthood, learning more as the world itself changes. Such a society has as a basic foundation the idea that education is important not only because of what it contributes to one's career goals but also because of the value it adds to the general quality of one's life. Also at the heart of the Learning Society are educational opportunities extending far beyond the traditional institutions of learning, our schools and colleges. They extend into homes and workplaces; into libraries, art galleries, museums, and science centers; indeed, into every place where the individual can develop and mature in work and life."

A Nation at Risk, 1983, pp. 13-14

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